11 March 1971

Dear Harold:

Under separate cover we're sending you a small tape with two commentaries which might be of interest to your.

The first is by Tom Hayden, one of the Chicago 7 defendants, on the Panther situation. He begins with George Sams and explores through Epstein and beyond. Everything he says is of course subject to verification, but I have always found him to be one of the brainiest and incisive on that side of the fence and he may provide a clue or so that may be new to you.

The other side is by someone named Michael Rossman (likely a pseudonym) whom we've never heard of before, but from his manner and sophisticated language appears to be someone of considerable education and experience. He deals with the drug scene -- he calls it the drug plague -- and picks up Cleaver's contention that drugs are an instrument of genocide and carries it to a postulated application to the youth community. Even this is hardly new, but he lists a number of interesting coincidences.

We are just as puzzled -- getting back to Cleaver-- as anyone else with the fury with which the Panther leadership is ripping out its own vitals. As noted before, we were favorably impressed with Cleaver's action against Leary, but in the light of subsequent developments are not so sure. Viewed objectively, it appears that the net result of what has been happening is that the Panther leadership has alienated itself not only from each other, but from the black community and also from its white supporters as well. If all this is coincidence, it is indeed fortuitous from the standpoint of those who would bring it about. If something more than coincidence is involved, it has to be regarded as a highly successful operation, very effective at both poles of the internal split that has developed. On this level, it has to be postulated that both factions have been penetrated and effectively derailed.

It is of course normal for factions to develop in the leadership of any revolutionary movement, but it is hardly normal for a man of Cleaver's experience to get on a talk show from Algeria to San Francisco and dump the whole thing in public.

Nor is Newton a dummy, and the fury with which he and Cleaver went at each other suggests each suspected the other was under the influence. Both may have been right. Cleaver after all is much isolated. Newton's occupation of a $650 per month luxury apartment in Oakland is of course logical from a security standpoint, but the question of where the money comes from remains altogether unanswered.

This is purely a personal impression, but last Friday, March 5, I covered a a Seale-Huggins-Davis-Magee rally at Oakland Auditorium. Security was unprecedented, entirely by blacks, and not a cop or normal guard was in sight. I was frisked three times -- twice by the same boy -- due to having to move in and out of the auditorium to a telephone, and the job was thorough.

Newton appeared half way through and spoke briefly, very nervous and speaking in a rush of words difficult to follow because of an overpowering sound system. His whole theme was unity, and he didn't mention Cleaver. However this was the first time I had actually seen him speak (although I've listened to several tapes of him) and I am told he always appears nervous and speaks in a rush. His chief of staff, David Hilliard, did not appear.

I have another note to write to you on other matters, so will knock this off for now.

Best,

jdw

p.s. -- While we're on the subject of tapes, which do you prefer ? Reels or casettes ? If casettes, can you use the popular mini-casette ? If reels, what size and speed ? No point in sending you a tape you can't play.

pp.s. -- Back to the Panthers: Jenifer just happened to catch a fragment of a Jim Eason talk show on KGO. Several callers in succession had seen the David Frost show and without exception were anti-Garry and pro-Epstein. The New Yorker article was not mentioned in the portion she heard. As you may know, Eason in the past has been remarkably openminded and even favorable toward the Panthers. He wound up completely turned around, saying he now finds Garry and the whole Panther bit a complete bore.